Airports and Seaports

The Bay Area has three major airports (San Francisco International Airport, Oakland International Airport and San Jose International Airport) and five major seaports (San Francisco, Oakland, Redwood City, Benicia and Richmond). Airports and seaports are included in this report because they serve as regional gateways and generate considerable ground traffic by cars, trucks and rail. Statistics on air passengers and air and marine cargo are presented to track changes in traffic generated by airports and seaports.

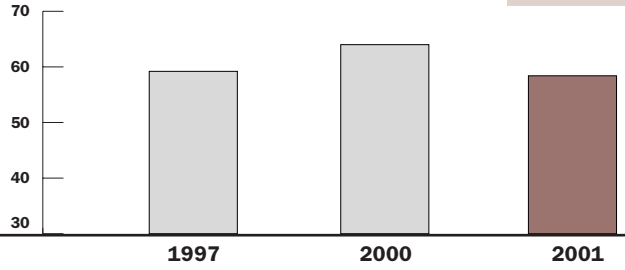
Losing Altitude: Air Travel and Cargo Drop Below 1997 Levels

The combined impact of a slowing economy and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks reversed a steady growth trend in the numbers of passengers and tons of cargo handled by Bay Area airports. This heavy one-two punch not only knocked 2001 passenger and air cargo totals off their 2000 highs, it caused volumes to drop below 1997 levels. And whether measured in numbers of airline travelers or tons of airborne goods, San Francisco International Airport bore the brunt of the falloff in air traffic.

In 2001, 58.5 million passengers passed through the region's three international airports, 5.5 million fewer than in 2000 and 700,000 fewer than in 1997 (see table and graph below). These figures represent declines of 9 percent and 1 percent, respectively. A closer look at the data reveals that declining volumes at the region's busiest airport, San Francisco International, account for the entire falloff in passenger traffic. By contrast, traffic into and out of Oakland and San Jose increased by healthy margins

Air Passengers at Bay Area Airports, 1997, 2000 and 2001

	Millions of Passengers[1]			Percent Change	
Airport	**1997**	**2000**	**2001**	**2000–2001**	**1997–2001**
San Jose	10.2	13.1	13.1	0%	+28%
Oakland	9.1	10.6	11.4	+8%	+25%
San Francisco	39.9	40.3	33.9	-16%	-15%
Total	**59.2**	**64.0**	**58.4**	**-9%**	**-1%**



Sources: Port of Oakland, San Jose International Airport, San Francisco International Airport

[1]Measured by enplanements and deplanements.

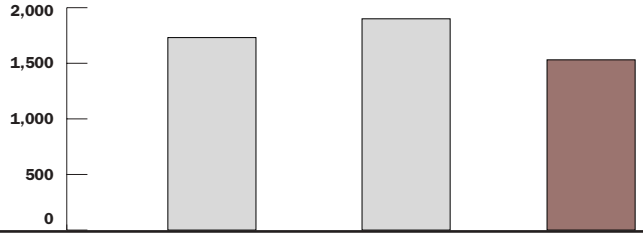
Data for 1998 and 1999 not available.

during the 1997–2001 period. And though 2001 was a flat year for San Jose, passenger traffic at Oakland International continued to rise despite the stalled economy and the trauma of September 11. One possible reason that Oakland was not as greatly affected as the other two airports is the strong presence there of Southwest Airlines, which (unlike most other airlines) did not cut back on flights after the terrorist incidents.

In percentage terms, the falloff in air cargo tonnage was even more dramatic than the decrease in passenger traffic, both for the one-year and four-year periods. The roughly 1.5 million tons of cargo that arrived in or departed the region by air in 2001 represented a 19 percent drop from the prior year, and a 12 percent decline since 1997 (see table and graph below). Again, San Francisco International witnessed the greatest reductions in traffic, but Oakland suffered significant declines as well. San Jose International experienced a modest dropoff in tonnage in 2001, but growth from 1997 to 2000 had been so robust that this smallest of the Bay Area's air cargo centers still posted a 29 percent increase in tonnage for the 1997–2001 period.

Air Cargo at Bay Area Airports, 1997, 2000 and 2001

	Thousands of Tons of Cargo[1]			Percent Change	
Airport	**1997**	**2000**	**2001**	**2000–2001**	**1997–2001**
San Jose	123	163	159	-2%	+29%
Oakland	748	775	671	-13%	-10%
San Francisco	860	962	701	-27%	-18%
Total	**1,731**	**1,900**	**1,531**	**-19%**	**-12%**



Sources: Port of Oakland, San Jose International Airport, San Francisco International Airport

[1]One ton = 2,000 pounds

Data for 1998 and 1999 not available.

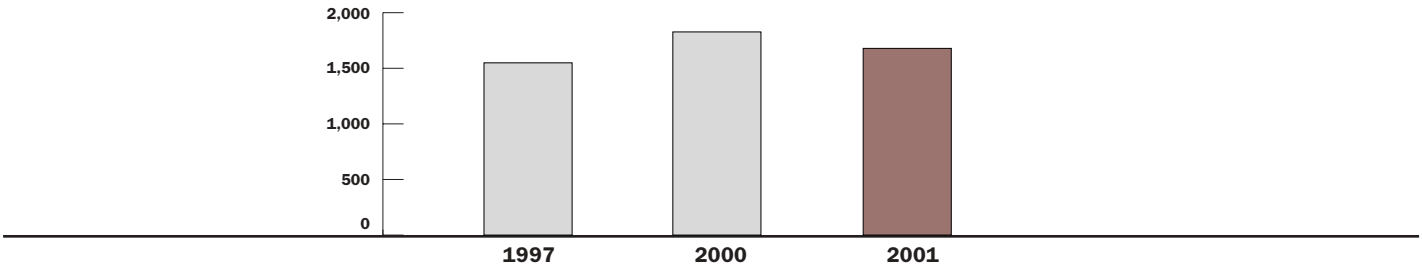
Container Cargo Activity Slows With Economy; Bulk Freight Bucks Trend

The Bay Area's ocean-going trade with the rest of the world suffered a setback in 2001, as the slowing economy took its toll on the number of containers moving through the ports of Oakland and San Francisco. As measured by the industry-standard "twenty-foot equivalent units" (TEUs), the volume of container cargo decreased 8 percent from 2000 levels (see table and graph below). But strong growth during the economic boom years of the late '90s resulted in an overall 8 percent increase in container shipments in the 1997–2001 time frame. Freight shipped in containers tends to be high-value manufactured products (such as computers, electronics and auto parts). Container cargo operations are concentrated almost exclusively at the Port of Oakland – by far the largest Bay Area port – though the Port of San Francisco also has container facilities.

The situation in the bulk freight cargo sector (mainly

Container Marine Cargo at Bay Area Seaports 1997, 2000 and 2001

	Thousands of TEU[1] Containers			Percent Change	
Port	**1997**	**2000**	**2001**	**2000–2001**	**1997–2001**
Oakland	1,531	1,777	1,644	-7%	+7%
San Francisco	18	50	35	-30%	+94%
Total	**1,549**	**1,827**	**1,679**	**-8%**	**+8%**



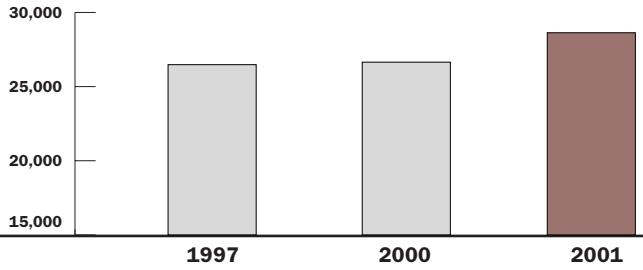
Sources: Ports of Benicia, Oakland, Redwood City, Richmond, San Francisco

[1]TEU = Twenty-foot equivalent containers

petroleum products, sand, cement and wood products) did not so closely track general economic conditions. While bulk freight shipments also grew by 8 percent over the four-year time period, most of this growth was recorded in 2001, when container volumes were shrinking. In that economically difficult year, bulk cargo tonnage actually grew by 7 percent. By contrast, bulk volumes were flat in the 1997–2000 period. The table below shows growth at the Port of Redwood City, where new cement-processing facilities were brought online, and at the Port of San Francisco, where domestic sand activity was reflected in annual tonnage figures for the first time. The Bay Area's largest bulk freight port, Richmond, is the gateway for most of the region's imported oil and gasoline. It, too, saw volume increase in 2001.

Bulk Marine Cargo at Bay Area Seaports 1997, 2000 and 2001

	Thousands of Tons of Bulk Cargo			Percent Change	
Port	**1997**	**2000**	**2001**	**2000–2001**	**1997–2001**
Benicia[1]	410	405	497	+23%	+21%
Oakland	2,318	1,861	1,901	+2%	-18%
Redwood City[2]	632	900	1,124	+25%	+78%
Richmond	23,012	22,541	24,185	+7%	+5%
San Francisco	107	942	925	-2%	+764%
Total	**26,479**	**26,649**	**28,632**	**+7%**	**+8%**



Sources: Ports of Benicia, Oakland, Redwood City, Richmond, San Francisco

[1]Benicia 1997 data does not include fuel/oil

[2]Redwood City 1997 data is for fiscal year 1996-97